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Sessions defends immigration policies after reported 'DREAMer' deportation

By Adam Shaw

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions defended the Trump administration's immigration policies Wednesday in response to criticism over the deportation of a 23-year-old "DREAMer" who was brought to the country illegally when he was 9.

In an appearance on Fox News' "Happening Now," Sessions was asked about the case of Juan Manuel Montes, who says he qualified for the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but was deported to Mexico in February after being stopped by a police officer in California. Montes is suing the federal government.

"Everybody in the country illegally is subject to being deported."

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— Fox News (@FoxNews) April 19, 2017

Montes' attorneys say he qualified for DACA in 2014, and was renewed in 2016. But U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials say his permit expired in 2015 and was not renewed. They also note that Montes had been convicted for theft.

Sessions said he doesn't know why Montes was deported, and denied that DACA recipients are being targeted for deportation. But he warned against illegal immigrants thinking they are safe from deportation just because they have lived in the country for a long time.

"DACA enrollees are not being targeted, I don't know why this individual was picked up," he said. "Everybody in the country illegally is subject to being deported, so people come here and they stay here a few years and somehow they think they are not subject to being deported -- well, they are."

President Trump has not been clear about his intentions for DACA recipients. While he pledged during the campaign to end DACA, so far he has not done so, and has said in interviews that DACA recipients should not be worried.

But Sessions warned that while the administration is focused on certain types of illegal immigrants, they weren't ruling out deporting anyone here illegally.

"Our priority is to end the lawlessness at the border, stop the additional flow of illegals into the country, then to prioritize those who have gotten in trouble with the law, recent arrivals, people who have been deported previously, drug dealers and other criminal activists, they need to be deported first," he said.

"But we can't promise people who are here unlawfully that they aren't going to be deported."

Montes' case swiftly was taken up by Democratic lawmakers and progressive groups, who cited the deportation as an example of a cruel immigration policy.

"The Trump Administration's cruelty toward the DREAMers disgraces our values as a nation," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. "Shame on them."

Adam Shaw is a Politics Reporter and occasional Opinion writer for FoxNews.com. He can be reached here or on Twitter: @AdamShawNY.

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